

## Activity: Threatened and Endangered Species Management

### Activity Summary (\$000's)

Subactivity	2001 Actual	2002 Enacted to date	Uncontrollable & Related Changes (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	2003 Budget Request	Change From 2002 (+/-)
T&E Management \$	21,334	21,618	+257	-587	21,288	-330
FTE	193	193		+5	198	+5

### 2003 PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

The 2003 budget request for Threatened and Endangered Species Management is \$21,288,000 and 198 FTE.

The BLM's Threatened and Endangered Species Management Activity addresses the conservation and protection of plants and animals that are listed, proposed for listing, or candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), as well as species designated by the BLM as sensitive. BLM public lands support at least 306 Federally listed species (171 Federal endangered, 114 Federal threatened, 13 proposed endangered, and 8 proposed threatened), 59 Federal candidate species, and an additional 1,500 BLM sensitive species. Collectively termed special status species, these occur over significant portions of the 264 million acres of public land managed by the BLM.

The BLM carries out programs for threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate species and the ecosystems upon which they depend with the ultimate goal of bringing these species and their habitats to a point where the protective provisions of the ESA are no longer necessary. Section 102(a)(8) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act requires the BLM to manage the public lands in a manner that protects resource values (such as scientific, historical, ecological, and scenic) while allowing appropriate land uses. This Activity funds inventory and monitoring of special status species populations; development of recovery plans and conservation strategies; implementation of recovery plan actions and conservation strategies; restoration of habitat; reintroduction of special status species back into their habitats; habitat mapping; and interagency cooperative conservation efforts and training related to the ESA



*The Blanca Wetlands in Colorado provide habitat for 21 listed and special status species. The wetlands and species will benefit by updating plans and wetland enhancement projects.*

Section 7 streamlined consultation process or pre-listing conservation efforts. For an overview of this program, please see the Report to Congress entitled *Endangered Species Act Implementation on Lands Administered by the BLM*, in Section XIX of the 2002 Budget Justifications document.

Conservation of species and habitats is accomplished through cooperative and collaborative processes. Internally, the BLM uses an interdisciplinary approach for planning projects. Externally, the Bureau communicates, consults, and cooperates with a host of Federal, State, and private organizations to leverage BLM appropriated funds and build partnerships. The BLM has been effective in both leading and participating in these cooperative efforts, and during 2003 the Bureau will continue partnerships with organizations effective in funding and implementing conservation programs and projects, particularly through the BLM Challenge Cost Share program, the Plant Conservation Alliance Grant Program, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Examples of projects the BLM may approve in 2003 include the following:

State	Project
Arizona	Upper Gila River/San Simon Watershed Restoration - Water quality in this "Showcase Watershed" will be improved by decreasing silt and salt loads through stream channel restoration and installation of grade control structures.
Colorado	Blanca Wetlands Project - Twenty-one special status species will benefit by updating the Integrated Activity Plan, through wetland vegetation enhancement projects, and by maintaining existing wells.
Colorado	Gunnison Sage Grouse Habitat Restoration - Vegetation treatments will be applied to 30,000 acres of big sagebrush to enhance habitat used by the Gunnison sage grouse for nesting and brooding.
Idaho	Southern Idaho Watershed Restoration - Several streams will be re-directed into natural stream channels to restore habitat for federally listed salmon, steelhead trout, and bull trout.
New Mexico	Black-Tailed Prairie Dog Habitat Assessment and Restoration - Habitat suitability will be assessed within the historic range of this species and 10,000 acres of prairie will be treated to remove invasive brush species.
New Mexico	Las Cruces Threatened and Endangered Species Surveys - Inventories will be conducted to ascertain the presence and distribution of the aplomado falcon and long-nosed bat.
New Mexico	Lesser Prairie Chicken Conservation - Lesser prairie chicken populations and associated habitats will be monitored to locate breeding grounds and determine population, distribution, and habitat conditions. Information will be used to improve management for this species.
Nevada	Humboldt-Great Basin Restoration Initiative - 500 acres of cheatgrass will be treated to restore a sagebrush-grass community for the greater sage grouse and livestock management will be improved to protect important Lahontan cutthroat trout habitat.
Oregon	Burns Sagebrush Restoration - Brush beating, burning, juniper removal, and weed treatments will be applied to enhance or restore sagebrush habitat.

Utah	Special Status Species Surveys and Recovery Plan Implementation - Sensitive species inventories and research will be conducted throughout Utah with special focus on Mexican-Spotted owls, southwestern willow flycatchers, and Utah prairie dogs.
Wyoming	Southwest Watershed Improvement - Partners will conduct rare plant, weed, and wildlife/fish inventories to assist with Bureau management planning.

Special status species that are close to areas in the western U.S. experiencing rapid urban growth face a high probability of decline unless proactive management occurs in these areas. Many habitat areas for these species also provide excellent recreational opportunities for people living in the surrounding communities, setting the stage for potential conflict. Proactive management which could reduce this conflict, includes such activities as: educating the public regarding the importance of these areas, working with recreation programs to establish use areas, directing the public away from sensitive areas onto those that can sustain recreational use, and either restoring or enhancing habitat to increase biodiversity potential.

The number of listed, proposed, and candidate species occurring on public lands continues to increase; therefore, during 2003 the threatened and endangered species management program will focus on the following four key areas of endangered species management: inventory, conservation and recovery planning, implementation of conservation and recovery actions, and ESA Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Integrated within these priorities will be the development and implementation of multispecies conservation plans and activities on a landscape scale and the restoration and protection of priority habitats for plant and animal species to assure their health and survival, preferably before invoking the ESA. Both recovery and preventative measures can help ensure that activities on public land do not jeopardize a species or adversely affect designated critical habitat, as required by the ESA.

**Inventory** - To make sound management decisions, the BLM must have reliable data concerning the status, trend, and condition of wildlife, plant, and aquatic resources on public land. This information is critical in determining the need to list a species and may help in deferring or even eliminating the need to list a species. For example, on January 8, 2001, FWS announced that the swift fox would no longer be listed as a threatened species under the ESA. This decision was based, in part, on inventories conducted by the BLM in Montana, Wyoming, and New Mexico which indicated that the swift fox is more abundant and more flexible in its habitat requirements than originally believed. The BLM will continue to inventory and monitor public land for special status species to ensure stable or increasing trends in their populations. Additionally, the BLM will work with NatureServe, The Nature Conservancy, and other partners to understand the importance of the populations of special status species that occur on BLM-managed land relative to their entire range and distribution.



*Wildlife biologists in Oregon equip a spotted owl with a radio to gain a better understanding of this species, including habitat requirements. This type of information allows the BLM to make sound management decisions.*

**Recovery Planning** - The BLM assisted in developing nine recovery plans in 2001 and will continue

to work with FWS and other partners in developing recovery plans for federally listed species in 2003. Planning of overall management direction based on special status species needs ensures that all other BLM actions or authorizations are consistent with and support the conservation and recovery of these species and their habitats. In addition, the development of the BLM's conservation strategies for restoring and managing the sagebrush and prairies will enhance the habitat of many declining species. The goal of these strategies is to implement management actions that will preclude the need to list species. See the wildlife management and fisheries management section for more detailed discussion.

The BLM is leading the development of an interagency native plant materials strategy and program, as directed by Congress in its 2001 and 2002 Appropriations. This long-term program will ensure native plant seed is available for fire restoration and rehabilitation and weed eradication on federally managed lands. This program is vital to endangered species conservation and recovery.

**Recovery Implementation** - Implementation of conservation strategies and recovery plans ensures critical tasks and actions are completed to meet listed species and their habitat conservation needs. Over 950 species listed under the Endangered Species Act have recovery plans. These recovery plans lay out the conservation strategies with recovery objectives and implementation schedules of recovery tasks designed to delist a species. The Bureau is responsible for carrying out recovery tasks for species that occur on public land. During 2002, the BLM is developing a recovery plan tasks database to identify and track those tasks that the BLM is responsible to implement. The BLM will implement over 300 recovery plan tasks throughout 2002 and will continue to implement conservation actions in 2003, including the Black-Tailed Prairie Dog Habitat Assessment and Restoration project, which supports the New Mexico Black-Tailed Prairie Dog Management and Conservation Strategy. This conservation strategy is part of a collaborative effort with the USDA Forest Service, FWS, Department of Defense, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and New Mexico Heritage Program, to name a few of the partners. Another initiative, the Great Basin Restoration Initiative, was developed in recognition of restoration needs resulting from long-term habitat changes, including the 1999 wildfires that burned over 1.7 million acres in the Great Basin. The goal of the initiative, which includes Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Oregon and California, is to implement a set of actions that promotes plant community diversity and structure that are more resilient to disturbance and invasive species over the long term. This initiative represents a major shift in BLM's approach to managing lands and resources severely impacted by wildfire and other causes.

**Consultation** - With the increased listings of species and critical habitat, consultation with FWS and NMFS, as required by Section 7 of the ESA, is an increasing workload for BLM. Consultation ensures that activities on public lands can proceed in an environmentally appropriate manner. The Bureau continues to work cooperatively with the FWS, NMFS, and USDA Forest Service to train personnel on programmatic consultation for land use plan revisions and amendments. The BLM is also addressing the backlog for Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation by developing interagency consultation strategies for each State.

**National Fish and Wildlife Foundation** - The Bureau will continue to support the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation with \$3 million in 2003, of which \$250,000 comes from the threatened and endangered species management program.

## **PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

In 2001, major accomplishments in the threatened and endangered species management program included the following:

- The BLM updated the Special Status Species Management Manual (6840) to provide to BLM personnel current policy and guidance for the conservation of special status species of plants and animals and the ecosystems upon which they depend.
- Over 300 BLM personnel received training through a series of Interagency Programmatic Consultation Workshops held across the country as a follow up to a memorandum of agreement entitled "Endangered Species Act Section 7 Programmatic Consultations and Coordination among BLM, USDA Forest Service, NMFS and FWS" signed in 2000 to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of plan and programmatic level section 7 consultation processes.
- A website was established for the sagebrush ecosystem from which data can be downloaded. Currently there are 1,100 data layers available for anyone's use. These data layers are important for management of sagebrush ecosystems and their obligate wildlife species. The URL is <http://sagemap.wr.usgs.gov>.
- Idaho BLM partnered with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to conduct sage grouse breeding ground surveys on 600,000 acres and winter habitat surveys on 250,000 acres. Information will be used to determine sage grouse population trends, to identify and characterize key habitats for sage grouse, and to prioritize restoration projects.
- Idaho BLM conducted special status plant inventories for slickspot peppergrass, Mulford's milkvetch, Malheur princesplume, smooth stickleaf, Cusick's chaenactis, and cowpie buckwheat on a total of 17,000 acres within the Owyhee Front. Information will be used to address off-highway vehicle road designations.
- Utah's Cedar City Field Office implemented vegetation treatments in 1998 and 1999 to improve existing habitat and to create new research/transplant sites for the Utah prairie dog. Improving habitat assists in meeting population recovery goals. Providing new transplant sites assists in implementing of the Iron County Habitat Conservation Plan. Add-on funding was used to monitor 1,500 acres of existing habitat, and 1,600 acres of vegetation treatments to improve existing habitat or create new habitat. Data will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of different treatments and progress tracked towards meeting our goal of complying with habitat guidelines.



*Although the purple-blue-eyed grass is not rare, other species of blue-eyed grass are rare in Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Wyoming, and Arizona. Plantsurveys are important to identifying critical habitats and preventing the need to list species as threatened or endangered.*

- BLM Montana has been actively managing a large prairie dog complex for black-footed ferret reintroduction. Within the Malta Field Office, over 1,000 acres of prairie dog towns were dusted with chemicals to control fleas, which serve as vectors for the spread of plague, and maintain prairie dog town densities sufficient to support black-footed ferret recovery. On November 9, 2001, 20 ferrets were released on BLM public lands, the first release on BLM-managed lands.
- BLM Montana inventoried 150 sage grouse breeding grounds. A 130,000-acre area was mapped and digitized to reflect seasonal habitat use by sage grouse.
- The Farmington BLM Field Office in New Mexico constructed fences on approximately 25 riparian river tracts that support potential habitat for southwestern willow flycatchers as part of the Riparian Habitat Management Plan and the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Management Plan. Farmington also implemented a raptor nesting protection policy to protect nesting raptors from excessive noise levels created by oil and gas extraction.

In 2002, significant planned accomplishments include the following:

- Following an analysis of section 7 consultation needs for BLM's land use plans, a Conservation Assistance Team was formed with representatives from BLM, FWS, and NMFS. The team will visit each state BLM office and develop strategies for efficiently handling immediate consultation needs.
- One workshop with the USGS will develop a classification system for sagebrush ecosystem, while another workshop will delineate the sagebrush ecosystem from remote sensing data. Early this year, a broad-scale map of the Sagebrush ecosystem in the Great Basin and surrounding region will be completed.
- In Arizona, the BLM has worked with the Arizona Game and Fish Department, FWS, Bureau of Reclamation, public land users, and volunteers to re-establish endangered Gila topminnows and desert pupfish on sites on public land. Fish have been and will continue to be re-established at two sites: the Agua Fria Grasslands National Monument and the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. Several sites will be evaluated for additional re-establishments.

The following are examples of collaborative and cooperative management activities on projects that have been and will continue to be funded in the threatened and endangered species management program:

- The BLM continues to address its backlog of ESA Section 7 consultations. Consultations are being completed to be able to provide opportunities for environmentally responsible commercial uses of public lands. The BLM conducted interagency meetings at each of its state offices with FWS and NMFS to develop a strategy to address Section 7 consultation needs.
- The BLM is working cooperatively with the FWS, USDA Forest Service, and NMFS through the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to develop a draft concept for State Conservation Agreements. Six regional workshops were held across the country to

identify elements for this proactive conservation tool. States will take the lead in developing and implementing these agreements by focusing on the conservation of species that are declining but not federally-listed.

- In compliance with Congressional direction in the 2001 Appropriation, the BLM is participating in the development of an interagency long-term program to supply and manage native plant materials for use in restoration and rehabilitation efforts on Federal lands. The BLM is currently leading an interagency team preparing a report to Congress on their plans and recommendations in this regard. In 2001, the BLM dedicated about \$5 million toward this long-term program. These funds were distributed to BLM State Offices to support Federal, State, and Tribal native plant production and development facilities, public-private partnerships, and education and outreach.
- As part of the BLM Memorandum of Agreement with the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (RBG), RBG funded a coordinator in BLM to develop the "Seeds of Success" program in the United States. The program focuses on the collecting of seeds for restoring public lands. By the end of 2002, the BLM will have collected 400 species, including widespread common species as well as species needed for specific restoration projects (ie., food species for the sage grouse). Through the MOA, half of each seed sample collected is returned to the United States for long-term seed storage or for use by local field offices to increase the local native seed supply for restoration and emergency fire rehabilitation and stabilization projects.
- During 2001, BLM Montana began a collaborative project with Montana State University to complete a two-year study to convert from crested wheatgrass back to native prairie grasses and forbs. To date, 1,000 acres of prairie have been treated with a chisel plow and interseeded with native species.
- In Oregon, the BLM and FWS piloted an approach to address a national policy impasse that delayed endangered species consultations for all BLM right-of-way authorizations. This work streamlined the consultation process and significantly improved administrative efficiency, customer service, and protections for Federally listed species. This process can be used nationally and currently is being expanded to include much of western Oregon and northern California.
- Utah BLM monitored 20 habitat complexes occupied by the Utah prairie and maintained five habitat treatment protection fences consisting of 11¼ miles. BLM was assisted by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and the USGS-BRD with setting up Utah prairie dog transplants on BLM-managed lands.
- In Washington, the BLM, FWS, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife are working cooperatively to map the remaining deep-soil sagebrush habitats that support, or could potentially support, the pygmy rabbit and the Washington ground squirrel. The Columbia Basin population (Washington only) of the pygmy rabbit has been listed as endangered for 240 days under an emergency rule until a proposed rule is completed. The ground squirrel is a Federal candidate for listing. A captive breeding effort is also underway to augment the declining numbers of pygmy rabbits, which currently occupy less than 1% of their historic range in Washington. Future survey efforts and potential release sites will be determined by the results of the mapping effort.



## JUSTIFICATION OF 2003 PROGRAM CHANGES

### 2003 Program Changes

	2003 Budget Request	Program Changes (+/-)
\$ (000's)	21,288	-587
FTE	198	+5

The budget request for Threatened and Endangered Species Management is \$21,288,000 and 198 FTE, a program decrease of \$587,000 and an increase of 5 FTE from the 2002 enacted level.

**Threatened and Endangered Species Conservation Plans, (+\$1,000,000)** - These funds support the BLM's goal of restoring at risk resources and maintaining functioning systems by achieving a stable or increasing trend in the resident populations of 50% of the plant and animal species listed or proposed for listing pursuant to the ESA. In 2003, the BLM is requesting \$1 million to initiate development of conservation plans in three regions: Prairie and Plains, Wyoming Basin, and Colorado Plateau. Conservation plans will address all special status species in addition to recovery of species that are already listed and will incorporate assessments of both species and their habitats. These combined assessments will facilitate developing integrated conservation and restoration strategies for large landscapes. Priorities for restoration and conservation treatments will be established and subsequently incorporated into land use plans.

**Challenge Cost Share, (-\$1,500,000)** - Challenge Cost Share funding will be consolidated in a new activity that improves cooperative conservation and cost sharing opportunities. See Challenge Cost Share Activity for a more detailed description of the program.

**Travel Reductions, (-\$87,000)** - Travel and transportation expenses in this program will be reduced through management reform and efficiencies.

## WORKLOAD MEASURES

Workload Measure	2001 Actual <sup>2</sup>	2002 Planned	2003 Proposed
Wildlife and Plant Inventories (acres) <sup>1</sup>	10,033,343	7,500,000	7,500,000
Species Populations Monitored <sup>1</sup>	4,199	3,700	3,700
Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery Plans	9	9	23
Special Status Species Recovery & Conservation Actions	304	250	250



<sup>1</sup>These workload measures represent the combined efforts of multiple subactivities.

<sup>2</sup>Definitions of workload measures were clarified in 2002, resulting in improved tracking of planned accomplishments.